

Understanding Addiction

Fort Knox ASAP ... 2004 Edition

Addictions...

- Addiction is a dependency on a substance, an activity, or a relationship that pulls the addict from everything else in the world.

Addictions...

- Characterized by desires that consumes people's thoughts and behaviors, and is acted out in habitual activities – developing into addicting behaviors.

Addiction...

Is unlike simple habits or consuming interests...

- Instead, addictions are dependencies with real life consequences that seriously impair, negatively affect, and destroy relationships, health (physical and mental), and the capacity to function effectively.
- Addiction is debilitating.

In the end,

- Addicts are ‘dependent’ on that thing which dominates their thoughts and desires, directs their behaviors, and the pursuit of that thing becomes the most important activity in their lives.
- In the advanced stage of addiction, nothing is as important as the addiction itself.

How Do People Become Addicted?

- Some people see addiction as a disease – afflicted and have little power over the cause or onset of addiction
- Others – see addictive behaviors as a choice and addiction as frequent outcome of this choice.

Addiction ...

- Considered by some to be a pre-disposition (**the addictive personality**)
- Others believe it develops through **exposure** to the addictive behaviors of others (such as family members)

In the case **physical** addictions ...

- Alcoholism or drug dependence – many believe that addiction is passed on **genetically**.
- Some believe that it is the result of **repetitive behavior** that can lead to physical or psychological dependence.

It is also true...

- That not all addictions are physical... gambling for example can be just as addictive and destructive.

Defining Addiction is not simple...

- The key to addiction is an **obsessive and compulsive need or dependence** upon a substance, an object, a relationship, an activity, or a thing.
- Realistically speaking, someone can be addicted to almost anything.

Six clear indicators of an addiction:

- ❑ An object of desire (alcohol, food, sex)
- ❑ Preoccupation – obsession with the object of desire
- ❑ Driven Behaviors – Compulsion to reduce cravings and satisfy the obsession

Indicators...

- Lack of control – Addiction always implies a lack of control over thoughts, feelings, ideas, behaviors when it comes to the desired thing.
(when they try to cut back – they fail....remember, this is the hallmark of an addict and dependence)

Indicators...

- Dependence – a dependence on the object of desire – to satisfy that need
- Negative consequences – Addiction is always accompanied by harmful consequences.

The Continuum of Addiction

- Addicts don't become addicted overnight...there is a **progression**.
- Tolerance – is created through **repeated** use, in which more and more of the substance or activity is required to feel the emotional satisfaction that the addiction brings.

Progression of Addiction - Measured in Two Ways...

1. The **effect** that addictive behaviors have on effective and healthy personal functioning.
 2. The **intensity** of cravings for the substance, activity, relationship, or thing.
- These 2 measures can help one **gauge** their progression into addiction.

Three Phases in the Progression of Addiction:

□ **Early phase:**

- * Sudden changes in friends, amount of time spent away from home
- * Sneaking drinks or drugs
- * Use of mood changing chemicals as a means of coping with stress
- * Increased tolerance of the substance
- * Use of paraphernalia

Crucial Phase:

- * Job problems
 - Marital problems
 - Physical and psychological problems
 - Broken promises to quit
 - Indefinable fears
 - A noticeable loss of friends

Chronic phase:

- ❑ Continued physical deterioration with tremors and shakes during periods when not using
- ❑ Divorce
- ❑ Incarceration
- ❑ A total break down of value systems
- ❑ Loss of employment
- ❑ Collapse of person's support system including family, close friends